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“ALL THINGS NEW”

N EARLY thirty years ago I remember walking in the garden of my boyhood's home with a young man who had yielded himself to Christ in some special services which my father had been conducting. Suddenly he stopped, and, plucking one of the leaves from a nasturtium plant, he laid it on my hand, and said to me, "Isn't that beautiful? I never knew how beautiful every leaf was until I gave myself to Christ." The statement made a deep and abiding impression on my heart. I could not quite understand it then, but I never forgot it, and as the years have passed I have learned what he meant. His new relation to Christ had set him in new relation to everything, and as he looked at one of the commonest of the garden treasures he saw in it the power and the beauty of his Lord and Master. Old things had passed away, and all things had become new. It was a testimony to the breadth and beauty of that Kingdom into which he had but recently passed.

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new sense of freedom, for the sins of the past are pardoned ; a new sense of power, for life more abundant has been given ; a new sense of hope, for Christ is crowned, and the heart at once detects His unconquerable Kingliness. At the outset of this life a few words of brotherly counsel will be welcome, and such are the words I desire to write in this message. They are to be of the most practical kind, and will refer to the new facts in your life.

Let me, therefore, first urge upon you that, having parted with the old things, you let them go. Let there be no lingering love for what you left behind in the supreme moment when you enlisted under the banner of the King. Mark your determination to press on into possession of the new land by burning every bridge behind you. Make no provision for going back. Old habits, old haunts, old friendships, which have hindered in the past, must be resolutely and for ever forsaken. We all know the point of our weakness, and it is at that point that we need to concentrate. There can be no measure too stringent which has for its object the severing of old ties once and for ever. I write thus strongly at the beginning because I have seen so many mar their testimony for years, and some altogether relapse into the life of worldliness and sin, because at the beginning they locked up some evil thing in a secret compartment, promising not to use it, but refusing to part with it altogether. I beseech you, therefore, at the outset, hand every key over to the King, and let nothing remain in your life that has exerted an evil influence upon it in the past.

The New Fact.—For one moment honestly face this fact. You have yielded yourself, spirit, soul, and body, to God. He has received what you have yielded. He is pledged to this. There need remain no doubt in your heart. In His receiving of your surrendered life you have been by His grace forgiven, justified, born anew, and sanctified. All the past is pardoned for the sake of Christ. You are cleared from guilt because your Saviour bore your punishment in His own body on the tree. You have received from Him, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a new life, which is the very life of Christ. In the purpose of God you are sanctified—that is, set apart to Himself, for the accomplishment of His purpose in you and through you. Think honestly and gladly of these glorious facts.

The New Responsibility.—You have now one responsibility, and that is loyalty to your Lord. “One is your Master, even Christ.” Understand that from this moment you are supremely responsible to Him alone. Let the negative side of this fact grip your conscience. Your first care henceforth is not what man may think of you or plan for you. It is rather what He thinks of you, and what He plans for you. Nothing will be of more service to you in all the days to come than that at the beginning your mind should be freed from the fear of men, not only from the fear of those who oppose, but also from the fear of those who honestly would desire to help you. Your laws of conduct are not to be taken from any human being, but immediately and directly from Him. Suffer no priest to dictate to you what you may or

what you may not do, but never decide for yourself what you may or may not do. You have now the right of appeal in every moment of your life to your new King. You will find it easy to please Him. His yoke is easy, His burden is light, and as you learn of Him you will find in very deed that He is meek and lowly of heart. You must not, however, allow this fact to make you negligent, but must rather watch constantly at His gates, and listen always for His voice, remembering that you are responsible to Him, and to Him alone.

The nature of your new responsibility is twofold. You are responsible for the honour of His Name, and you are responsible for the extension of His Kingdom. You will fulfil the first part of the responsibility—the honouring of His Name—by realising His purposes for you in character. What you *are*, in temper and in tone, will either honour or dishonour the sacred name you bear. You will fulfil the second part of this responsibility—the extension of His Kingdom—by your conduct. What you *do* all the time, and in every department of your life, will either have the effect of extending or hindering the extension of the territory over which He is King.

New Perils.—You stand, then, responsible to your Lord for the honour of His Name and the extension of His Kingdom. This at once leads us to name the new perils. Because you are now one of the King's own you have become a new centre of attack for His enemies. Where the devil left you alone he will now seek to harm you. You will be more than ever conscious of temptation. The attacks will be fiercer,

the methods will be subtler. The devil has one business in your life, and that is to break in upon your loyalty to your Master. It would be the worst kind of cowardice not to face this fact at the beginning of your Christian life. You have now to enter upon a new warfare with all the forces of darkness.

Moreover, you have become a new point of light in the darkness of the world, and therefore a new point of interest to ungodly men. You will be watched as you have never been watched before. You will be persecuted in all probability. You will be enticed from your allegiance, invited again and again to the old paths. If you yield, these men will despise you. If you stand firm, they will admire you, and it may be, by your honest conversation, that they will be won for the Kingdom of the Christ.

You have entered, then, upon a life that has its own peculiar perils. It is well to understand this, for the victory is half won when the enemy is known. Perhaps my words so far have made some weak soul tremble in the presence of such responsibility and such perils ; but the glory of the Gospel lies in the fact that I have now to write of the new resources. There are many. Let me deal briefly with the principal of them, as they include the rest.

And first, never forget that if your responsibility is to your Master, the first fact of your new resources is the Master Himself. He is pledged to you. You may reckon on Him. By your act of surrender you admitted Him to the comradeship of your life, and passing into comradeship with you, He places at your

disposal actually all the resources of His wisdom and His strength.

Then also the Holy Spirit, as the Administrator of the Kingdom of Christ, is yours. He indwells you. He is there for the express purpose of revealing Christ to you. He is there to give you light in every place of your darkness, to make real to you that comradeship of the Christ which is your inheritance in the Kingdom.

You have, moreover, the Church, with its blessed communion of saints. Here you will find the new friends of your new life. Within the Church you will discover openings for the exercise of all the gifts bestowed upon you in your creation. Here also you will find the fellowship of sympathy and of strength that you need. Man is made for comradeship with man, and the friendships that are purest and brightest and best are friendships formed within the Church of Christ.

And yet again, you have the Bible. You have never possessed the key to this Book before. You do now. It is God's message to you. You will not find it enunciate *rules* for the conduct of your life, but you will find that it declares *principles* of action; and you will find, moreover, that it is full of messages that breathe with the very love of God, messages that will bring you comfort in every hour of your sorrow, strength in every moment of weakness, and hope in the dark days of despair.

And once again, the mercy-seat is open to you. Wherever you are, *there* is the place of prayer. You have to take no pilgrimage to a far-away shrine,

neither have you to ask the permission of any priest to enter the sacred precincts. The veil was rent in the hour of your Lord's dying, and you have access through Him at all times to the secret place of the Most High. You may come to that mercy-seat for confession in the hour of your sin, for worship at all times, and for intercession on every occasion of need. All these resources are yours, but having said so much, it is necessary to declare the practical application of these facts.

New Activities.—All the former facts are glorious indeed. You, however, are still endowed with the gift of will, and these infinite resources will only be of practical value as you use them. You have to act. It will be under direction ; it will be with a definite purpose ; but act you must. Pass, then, again over the facts already dealt with, in order to note your practical relation to them.

First, your Master. If He be your Master, then you are to trust Him. Never question His wisdom, but follow immediately, and without parleying. Never question His love, but if He lead you through nights of darkness, know that it is toward the dawning of a brighter light ; and if the portion of His hand for you be pain, know that out of the pain He will bring a joy and satisfaction that could be found in no other way. Trust Him utterly, and obey Him instantly. Remember that your daily work is henceforth to be done for Him, and all the minutest details of your life are to be such as await His inspection, and ask His approval. No words of mine can tell you the quiet holy gladness that will fill your soul, as

you thus begin to live for Him. The commonest duties of home and school and office and shop will create new experiences of delight as they are done for His sake.

Then as to your perils. Have one policy with regard to the devil. Don't argue with him; hit him. If you begin to parley, he is considerably older than you are; his experience is very varied; he will win. When he approaches, remember that you will prove your courage by silently abiding where your Master has put you, and if you do speak to him, be not wise above the wisdom of your Lord, and let it be only to declare to him the "It is written" that conditions your position.

Never forget, moreover, that it is "the foxes," "the little foxes," that "spoil the vines." Take them, therefore, and slay them without pity. Do not permit the bloom to be taken from the fruitage of your life. You will not find your adversary commence his attack by suggesting some heinous form of sin. He will taunt you, and try you with the little sins that do not seem to matter. Remember that there are no little sins, and give the enemy no occasion for triumph.

As to the perils arising from your necessary intercourse with ungodly men and women, do not hesitate to confess Christ from the beginning. Make no apology for your Christianity. Glory in your relationship to the Lord; and yet in your confession, and in your attitude, be kind, courteous, gentle. Let there be no manifestation of Pharisaism in your claim to be Christian. Prove to those who watch you that

Christliness is readiness to serve the unworthy as well as the worthy. A helping hand often reveals a sanctified heart, and a bright, happy confession of Christ, coupled with eagerness to serve, will disarm criticism, and end persecution ; and, what is of infinitely more value, win men more quickly than any other method.

Then as to the resources at your disposal. Use them every one. This sacred comradeship with Christ, enter into all its blessedness, in the sense of what He is in fulness, and what you are in dependence and need. For all the pathway of life keep your eyes upon Him. Keep child-like enough to let Him take your hand and lead you. Don't imagine some fine bright morning, when no sorrow looms like a cloud upon your way, that now you can manage without Him for a few hours. Talk to Him constantly, not only in the special seasons of prayer, but on the street, in the railway train, anywhere, everywhere. Lift your heart, look into His face, catch His smile, smile back at Him. Cultivate your comradeship, and if in your walk with Him you should fall, get up and go on. The devil will at once say to you, "Do you call yourself a Christian?" Heed not the suggested lie. You *are* a Christian. Your fall was an accident, not a habit. Your Lord would not have you fall, and had you been watching Him, and letting Him lead, you would not have fallen, "for He is able to keep you from stumbling." But the fact that you fell has not alienated His love. I remember when my twelve-months' old laddie began to walk. With what delight we watched the first tottering steps ! One day, down

he went, all in a heap, and I straightened my back, and disowned him, and disinherited him? That did not I! I picked him up, and set him on his feet, and kissed away his tears, and felt all the pain of his fall, and bade him try again. He tried, and walked the better. And is my love to my child more tender than your Lord's love to you? The illustration is the answer to the question. If you fall, get up, tell Him, have His forgiveness, and learn from your fall new dependence.

Then as to the Church. The Church cannot help you as long as you stand outside and criticise it. Join the Church, and that immediately. Do not wait until you have found a Church in all details perfect, for if you do you will have to wait till the first morning after the resurrection. Yet be careful what Church you join. The principle of selection is a very simple one. Find the Church in which you will most easily have communion with your Lord, the Church in which your spiritual life is likely to be strengthened most. I care nothing as to its ecclesiastical polity, nothing as to its form of worship. Neither magnificent ritual nor Puritan simplicity should attract you in themselves, but the enthroned and glorified Christ; and wherever you find you can come into communion with Him in worship most easily, there settle.

Having joined the Church, do not expect to be nursed. Our Churches are too full of perambulator Christians, people who if they are not likely to be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, certainly seem as though they wanted to be nursed with great

care and attention—incubator sort of people. Remember that Jesus said to the man at Bethesda not only “Rise, take up thy bed,” but “walk.” And so I pray you, while in the Church, sharing the privileges of its fellowship, let your dependence be on your Lord. In that fellowship, moreover, take no Christian as your example, nay, not even the best, for so surely as you do, sooner or later you will be disappointed. Let your Lord alone be the ideal of your life. He will never disappoint you.

Having joined the Church, expect not merely to share the privileges of fellowship, but the responsibilities of service. Reconsider the whole question of your financial position in life, deciding first the proportion that you are able to devote to the work of God in the world. Then find your niche of service in the school, in the mission-hall, in open-air work, in the choir, anywhere, but somewhere, for Christ's sake. And having found your niche, fill it. Never mind the man in the next niche. You won't help the work of the Church by criticising your fellow-member. Do your work, do it well, do it faithfully. Your full-orbed service will be far more likely to stimulate the neglectful brother than any criticism you can offer upon his neglect.

Then as to your Bible. Study it, take time to do so. Remember you cannot treat this Divine library as you have been in the habit of treating the circulating library of fiction. The Bible is not a book to be taken up in spare moments to tickle the fancy, and please the imagination. It demands the dis-

ciple's heart, it asks devotion. Answer its demands, and its treasures are illimitable, its delights such as no other reading can ever bring to the weary, tired heart of man.

And then, lastly, the mercy-seat. Be familiar with it. If it be possible, have your morning watch. I do not say one hour, I do not say five minutes. There is no time in the economy of God, and almanacs and calendars are encumbrances in the life of communion. But see to it that every day, before you look upon the face of man, you look into the face of your Lord. And not only at the beginning, but in the midst of the strife of the day, break away, if it be possible, to some secret place. End the day where you began it, at the mercy-seat. Find some attic, or lumber-room, or any other place safe from intrusion, and make that your Bethel. At the mercy-seat attempt to hide nothing. You cannot hide; don't imagine that you can. All the inner secrets are naked and open to the eyes of Him with Whom you have to do. Realise this, and speak to Him with contrition and repentance of the things that you would hide from others.

At the mercy-seat, moreover, praise God. Your song may seem to be of no account in the mighty chorus that ever beats in tides of music upon the throne of the Eternal. But He hears it, and He wants to hear it. He waits for the sacrifices of praise, and, small though your contribution may seem to be, without it to the Infinite ear a tone is missing in the orchestra, and He will never be satisfied until the harmonies are complete. Don't

disappoint God. Sing your song, and offer your praise.

And yet again, at the mercy-seat intercede. Tell your own need. There roll your burden upon the Lord. But particularly pray for others by name, often, earnestly. He knows and yet He would have you tell Him. He has told us to bring with us words, and come before Him. He has ordained that blessing shall come in answer to intercession. It was at infinite cost that He provided the mercy-seat. Don't slight the love that prompted the provision, but make use of it in confession, in praise, and prayer.

Now in conclusion. In few words have I written to you of the new life. How delightful it would be to have you all to one's self or to gather you in companies and talk to you, not for a bare half-hour, but for days, of these sacred things. That is denied to any human teacher. I pray you, remember that the Teacher of teachers is ever with you, and as I point you to Him, let my last words be those of earnest and urgent entreaty. You have given yourself to God. Now give God a chance in your life. Let there be no mental reserve in your submission and surrender. Ruthlessly sweep on one side all interest and persons that would come between you and your Lord. Live from the beginning a life of passionate devotion. The one condition the Master loathes is that of lukewarmness. Never mind if men criticise and misunderstand. If He shall understand and appreciate, that is all. Never forget your Lord's love, His nearness, His interest, His power. Do

everything in His strength. Risk everything for His sake. So live your life as a Christian that if the Christ should fail you would forthwith be bankrupt. He will not fail, and you will never be bankrupt.



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